The Model of Principal Leadership in Hong Kong Protestant Christian Secondary Schools Following the Change of Sovereignty

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Background: This paper discusses a leadership model grounded in an investigation of the phenomenon of principal leadership in Hong Kong Protestant Christian secondary schools of one denomination, two years after the change of sovereignty to China (1st July, 1997).

Focus of discussion and comments: Using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, 9 principals and 16 senior teachers were interviewed to gather their perceptions about the principal's leadership role, and collect relevant documents. Subsequent analysis and interpretation of data indicated the complexity of the leadership role. Based on research findings and comparison with the literature, the emergent model comprises four broad leadership roles (in italics) which were correspondingly informed by leadership conceptions: (1) Christian leadership—*administering Christian education*; (2) Instructional leadership—*teaching and learning*; (3) Transformational leadership—*transforming the school community*; and (4) Leadership for School-based Management—*SBM and development*.

Conclusion: As the principal leadership role was enacted on Christian principles, the discussion of the model and implications drawn may advance school leadership and inform practitioners locally and internationally.

Keywords: Christian, principal, leadership

回歸後香港基督教中學校長領導模式

背景：回歸香港 (九七年七月一日) 之後兩年, 作者調查香港基督教其中一派別中學之校長領導角式, 本文討論從研究資料分析歸納出來的領導者模式。

討論焦點及論點：作者採用「現像推測」之研究方法, 訪問了九位校長及十六位資深教師, 收集他們對校長領導角式的看法, 這有了甚麼轉變, 以及有關文件, 然後根據資料加以分析及推測, 發現這個角式複雜。將研究發現與文獻作出及比較後, 浮現出一個包含了有四個範疇的領導模式: (一) 基督教領導—基督教教育行政; (二) 教學式領導—教學與學習; (三) 轉化式領導—轉化學校社群; (四)「校本管理」之領導—「校本管理」之發展。

總結：因校長按照聖經原則去實踐領導, 討論這個領導模式及表達其潛在意義, 或可推 進 學 校 領 導 及 為 本 地 或 其 他 國 家 之 同 行 者 提 供 資 料 。

關鍵詞：基督教，校長，領導

Introduction

This paper discusses the model of principal leadership of Hong Kong Protestant Christian secondary schools, which was grounded in a research study implemented two years after the change of sovereignty to China (1st July, 1997) (Yu, 2004, 2005). Using a hermeneutic phenomenology approach, the perceptions of principals and teachers were gathered through in-depth interviewing and relevant documents collected. Based on subsequent analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data, the researcher constructed the principal leadership model (refer to Figures 1-3). Because Christian education is highly valued (cf. Edlin, 1994) and has contributed greatly to local education (Ho, 1996), and because the principal leadership role involved the early stages of systemic change to School-based Management (SBM), this research may reveal valuable information to enlighten education practitioners and policy makers on school development. SBM is a world-wide trend of decentralization of resources to school level with a centrally determined framework of policies and accountabilities (cf. Caldwell & Spinks, 1998). Ideas generated may contribute to the leadership knowledge base both locally and internationally.

Background

The change of sovereignty ended British rule and Hong Kong became a special administrative region (HKSAR) with its own Basic Law for 50 years and "self-government" (Dimmock & Walker, 1997:284-99). The Sponsoring Body (SB) under study is a large council of Protestant Christian churches; it originated from the union of multiple missionary organizations and churches in China. Under the administration of the SB, the common school mission is to educate students to achieve six goals: ethics, intellect, physique, social skills, aesthetic, and spirituality. Spirituality is the chief focus of Christian education, which aims at teaching students about God through Religious Education as part of the school curriculum.

Research Questions

In the following research questions, the first four are briefly addressed in this paper (detailed in Yu, 2004, 2005), while the last one is the main focus of discussion:
1. How is the leadership role of the principal in a Hong Kong Christian secondary school experienced by the principal after the handover on 1st July, 1997?
2. How is the leadership role of the principal in a Hong Kong Christian secondary school viewed by teachers?
3. What changes in the leadership role of these principals have occurred because of the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong?
4. Are the principals' and teachers' perceptions consistent?
5. What model, or models, of leadership fit the leadership roles described?

Research Methodology

The research design is a partial replication of that of Gurr (1996) by using the *hermeneutic phenomenology* approach, which assumes that realities are multiple, constructed and holistic. Without using a predetermined theoretical framework to guide the collection of data (cf. Van Manen, 1990, 1997), the research participants spoke freely of their perceptions, and their subjective

experiences were described and interpreted in order to enrich human understanding and illuminate practices (Tesch, 1990:40,51). The *sample* was taken from a network of secondary schools administered by the SB, and 9 principals and 16 teachers were interviewed. All of these had worked in the relevant school for at least 5 years and 2 years respectively before 1997. The researcher collected relevant documents and qualitative *data* from the school leaders through in-depth interviewing, using an active listening technique (emphatic responding) to maintain the conversation and enable the informants to reveal concrete experience wherever possible (cf. Gurr, 1996:87-9; Van Manen, 1990:67-8). Gathering data from varied sources is a process of triangulation whereby the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings are increased (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290-327). The amended transcripts and documents were examined in order to search for themes, *analysed* and *interpreted* by making comments on the themes discovered, based on the researcher's understanding, which had been enriched by contemporary theories on leadership, constantly considering "parts and whole" and measuring "the overall design of the study/text against the significance that the parts must play in the total textual structure" (Van Manen, 1990:33-4).

Research Findings

Research findings addressing the first four research questions are reported briefly below (detailed in Yu, 2004, 2005), under the headings of the principal leadership role, changes to the principal leadership, and similarity of perceptions.

The Principal Leadership Role

Two years after 1997, the principal leadership role of the Hong Kong Protestant Christian secondary schools was found to be complex and multi-dimensional, with 18 leadership themes emerging from analysis, 14 of them noted to have been changed (in italics) because of the impact from the change of sovereignty: *accountability, change of sovereignty,* Christian education, *curriculum issues, decision making, delegation, information technology,* interaction with students, *interaction with teachers, media of instruction,* personal characteristics, *professional development, public relationships, School-based Management, Sponsoring Body,* values, *vision,* and *wider knowledge.* These themes largely contribute to the construction of the principal leadership model which will be discussed in detail in a later section.

The Impact of the Change of Sovereignty on the Role

Two years after 1997, the changes to the principal leadership role of the Hong Kong Protestant Christian secondary schools were found to be mainly the result of the new HKSAR government's ambitious education policies to raise the quality of education and maintain the international status of the city (cf., e.g. Wong, 1999:4,7, 2000:8). Changes in education policies experienced were externally imposed and the result of a combination of factors such as the economy, politics and community pressures (cf. Hopkins, 1994:1-14); and the greatest impact on all schools was the systemic change to SBM by the year 2000. In spite of ambivalent views found among the research participants, the interviewees' attribution of these changes in policy to the impact of the change of sovereignty was acknowledged, given

that these policies were mandated after 1st July, 1997. More about the changes to the principal leadership role is revealed within the discussion of the model.

Similarity of Perceptions

The degree of agreement between the principal and teacher interviews was found to be generally similar in all the schools, indicating that teachers and principals had a similar understanding of the core elements of the principal leadership role and the impact due to the change of sovereignty (detailed in Yu, 2004). It also indicates that the participants had described what had been actually happening in their schools at the time of interviewing (1999).

Leadership Conceptions

The Hong Kong Protestant Christian principal leadership role is discussed in the light of three relevant leadership conceptions: instructional leadership, transformational leadership and leadership for SBM.

Instructional Leadership

Showing competence as instructional leaders generally (cf. Lashway, Mazzarella & Grundy, 1997:19), some of the principals were more involved in teachers' instructional improvement effort, while others were busy with public duties. Five dimensions of instructional leadership specified by Weber (cf. 1997:258-76) are explored below, to reveal any evidence of instructional leadership in this research:

1. *Defining the school's instructional mission*—SBM implementation by 2000 required the defining of mission and goals by the principal, school leaders and staff in every school. That was to be achieved through discourse in committee and staff meetings, with consideration of accountability to the Education Department and community expectations.

2. *Managing curriculum and instruction*—The principals generally demonstrated indirect instructional leadership through delegating the Deputy Principals (DPs) and subject department heads to set departmental goals consistent with the school mission, with some showing more involvement in the annual planning and evaluation of instructional programs.

3. *Promoting a positive learning climate*—Harmonious relationships between the principal, staff and students were generally reported, with school administration influenced by Christian values and biblical principles manifested through regular morning assemblies, the teaching of Religious Education and Christian programs.

4. *Observing and improving instruction*—This had been established for years in all the participant schools, with peer observation in some of them, aiming to become non-threatening and conducive to teaching improvement. The principals generally observed the subject department heads, who observed the teachers within their own departments.

5. *Assessing the instructional program*—The principals had been leading the staff to write school reports, which included evaluation and assessment of school programs and student outcomes.

Instructional leadership was confirmed with the presence of all five stated dimensions as detailed by

Weber (cf. 1997:278). This research also supports team instructional leadership, as reflected by the Staff Development Committee/Team established in various participant schools (cf., e.g. Hallinger, 1989:319-29; Hopkins, 1994; Stringfield, 1994:289-90; Parker & Victoria, 1997).

Transformational Leadership

Based on the leadership conception of Bass and Avolio (cf. 1994:3-6), Bass and Avolio (cf. 1996, 1997, cited by Gurr, 2002:83), and Bass (cf. 1998:7), the evidence of transformational leadership in this research is explored below:

Transformational Leadership (TL):

1. *Idealized attributes*—The Christian principals generally exhibited authenticity and credibility, and inspired trust in themselves and in Jesus as the saviour.
2. *Idealized behaviours*—Some of the principals encouraged followers to share common visions and goals, and generated greater trust and deeper respect.
3. *Inspirational motivation*—The principals generally motivated the staff to achieve goals and unified vision through informal or formal communication through meetings, circulars, reports and bulletins.
4. *Intellectual stimulation*—The principals encouraged innovation and creativity from staff generally, as indicated by on-going PD among them, and application of Quality Education Funds supported research projects.
5. *Individualized consideration*— The principals led the school leaders in meeting the needs of individual staff members,

providing equitable support to develop teachers professionally.

Transactional leadership (TA):

6. *Contingent reward*—Rewards for the staff included promotion, recognition, praise, or special awards created. Christian staff would value rewards in heaven as stated in the Bible (e.g. Matt 5:11-12).
7. *Management-by-exception (active)*—New teachers were provided with feedback and advice, and workshops, or were mentored by senior teachers. Unsatisfactory performers would be warned and checked for progress, according to set procedures.
8. *Management-by-exception (passive)*—Since the principals were facing increased accountabilities, there could be matters regarding which the principal might only take action when an error occurred.

This research demonstrates strong evidence of both TL and TA, which were necessarily and simultaneously employed in the participant schools (cf. Bass, 2000). It also supports the behavioural characteristics of both types of leadership (cf. Bass & Avolio, 1993:49-76, 1994; Bass, 1998:6; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Barnett, McCormick & Conners, 1999), with variations in "amounts and intensities" (Bass, 1995:26). Contingent rewards are not limited to valued things on earth (cf. Bass & Avolio, 1994:3), but also in heaven, reserved for those who serve God (e.g. Luke 6:22-3). In quoting from the Bible, New International Version within BibleGateway.com (website: www.biblegateway.com) has been consulted. Varied conceptualisations of TL are also supported by this

research, e.g. Leithwood and Jantzi's (cf. 1997:313, quoted by Gurr, 2002) six basic characteristics of transformational school leaders were demonstrated by the principals generally.

Leadership for School-based Management

SBM is coupled with profound changes to the role of the principal, with centralization of standards and accountability but decentralization in the management of resources and decision making (cf. Caldwell, 1992, 1998; Connolly, Connolly & James, 2000). It brings work intensification and the emergence of a new professional culture (cf. Ford, 1995; Gurr, 1996; Johnston, 1997; Caldwell, 1998:449; Wee, 1998, 2000). Caldwell and Spinks' (cf. 1992, 1998:27-30) four-dimensional leadership conception for self-managing schools will now be discussed to decide on the evidence of leadership among the principals in this research:

1. *Strategic Leadership*—The principals discerned megatrends within principal associations; they led with consultation and shared decision making, built the capacity of staff through PD programs, and established structures and processes in school administration.
2. *Cultural Leadership*—The principals led staff to implement changes in education policies, exercising cultural leadership from dependency to autonomy, engaging in simultaneous centralization and decentralization, and focusing on quality improvement.
3. *Educational Leadership*—The aim of Improving learning and teaching was delegated to the subject departments; and

teachers were supervised and monitored towards improvement by their superiors, with increasing emphasis on PD to deal with multiple changes.
4. *Responsive Leadership*—The principals and staff were accountable for their performance and school achievements, and they participated in program evaluations; however, heavier workloads arose in processing data and writing up school reports.

The evidence of principal leadership encompassing four dimensions has fully confirmed the presence of leadership for SBM (cf. Caldwell & Spinks, 1992, 1998:27-30). School innovation is underpinned by networking outside organizations in the public or private sectors or universities, and building a capacity for leadership in at all levels (Caldwell, 2003:13), all of which is fully confirmed by this research.

The Christian Principal Leadership Model

Grounded in the research findings, the model of Christian principal leadership has been constructed with theory following data (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985:232). This model is discussed in the light of leadership literature and in terms of changes due to the change of sovereignty. The Christian principal leadership role is informed by four concurrent trends of leadership conceptions: Christian leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and leadership for SBM (refer to Figure 1); which at the same time construe, support and inform four broad leadership roles, respectively:

administering Christian education, learning and teaching, transforming the school community, SBM and development. Under each of these four broad leadership roles, relevant leadership functions (refer to Figure 2) have been generated from the participants' perceptions captured in the leadership role description, which comprises 18 themes. Theoretically, the more informed the principal is about the four leadership conceptions, the more s/he is knowledgeable in enacting the four broad leadership roles with success, provided that relevant skills, strategies and necessary resources are present. In the following, each of the four broad leadership roles and their respective leadership functions will be discussed in the light of the literature.

Administering Christian Education

Informed by the conception of Christian leadership (e.g. Haggi, 1986; The Bible Society in Australia, 1988; Schuller, 1988, 1993; Ford, 1991; Jones, 1992), the first broad leadership role of the principal is 'administering Christian education', which is related to the functions (refer to Figure 2) derived from the following themes: *Sponsoring Body, Christian education, values,* and *personal characteristics.* This role concerns the principal, who, being employed by the **Sponsoring Body**, provides support to the affiliated principals and co-ordinates with the staff to achieve the school mission, with support from the affiliated church nearby. It is quality education and the best possible in teaching students according to God's principles (Pang, 2000:5,6), equipping them to deal with future "life's challenges" (Edlin, 1994:37). SBM implementation from 2000 onward requires training of not only the principals but also the School Board members, who may then be better able to raise the quality of educational leadership (cf. Caldwell & Hayward, 1998:53). The SB demonstrated "strategic leadership" and "strategic thinking" (cf. Caldwell & Spinks, 1998:197-8) by networking the principals within the principal associations, enabling them to clarify issues, share ideas and strategies, and collaborate in school leadership. The principals' fellowship-like meetings implied a reliance on guidance and empowerment by the Holy Spirit through prayers (cf. John 14:26; Schuller, 1983, 1993; Schindler, 1995). Careful employment procedure is important in identifying the best employees (Nyland, 1997:293), the employment of Christian staff will share the SB's core Christian values which are not negotiable (cf. Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin & Kakabadse, 2002:172; Leithwood, 1993, quoted by Lashway, 1997a:60-2). With increased autonomy under SBM, more Christian staff may be employed, leading to a more unified focus on transforming the lives of students (cf. Twelves, 2001:72).

Christian leadership literature may inform the principal and the school leaders with knowledge, skills and strategies, in addition to inspiration drawn from Jesus' teachings and leadership in the Bible, e.g. Jones' (1992) advice to harness three types of strengths, and Schuller's (1983, 1988, 1993) theories about positive thinking, possibility thinking, creative ideas and strategies. Both authors stress the empowerment by God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, consistent with what was taught by Jesus in the Bible (Luke 11:12-13; 12:11-13; John 14:12,25-6; 20:21-2; Acts 1:7-8; 2:3-4,38-9), and not just about developing virtuous characteristics; and both are fully

confirmed by this research and the SB's beliefs as revealed in its website.

The unique mission of teaching students about God and spirituality has remained unchanged after the change of sovereignty. In administering *Christian education*, the principal establishes Christian culture (Ho, 2002), leads and supports the Religious Department, to which s/he delegates the planning and implementation of the religious curriculum and programs. The principal supervises the teaching of Religious Education, as for other subjects, supports and participates in religious activities, depending on his or her personal focuses and availability. The principal shares the pastoral role with the Christian staff by leading prayers, speaking in assemblies, and inspiring the school community to trust God through expressed *values*, principles and testimonies. Other than holding Christian values depicted in the Bible, the principal holds professional values such as emphasizing continual PD, sharing vision, collaboration, consultation, and establishing good relationships with the community. These values suggest that, being the followers of Jesus, the principal leads and serves the school community not only to acquire knowledge but also to know God and Jesus' salvation, taking the view that quality education depends on more than "the calibre of its teachers and school leaders" (Dimmock & Walker, 1997:300), but also on the guidance and empowerment of God's spirit. However, conflicting values may emerge among the stakeholders, between the Christian and non-Christian staff; and with many actors involved, it would require a capacity to manage conflicts (cf. Caldwell & Spinks, 1992), which can be disturbing and yet may lead to creativity and constructive action (cf. Huffstutter et al., 1997:374,388).

The *personal characteristics* of the principals welcomed by the teacher interviewees included capable, hard-working, openness, democracy, transparency in administration, trusting staff, participative, supportive, effective management, and accessibility to teachers and students. With positive attributes, the principal may establish a happier working relationship with staff.

The affiliated church is situated near the school or established in the school premises, and congregation meetings are held in the school hall. It provides a venue and opportunities for former and new students, their families and the community to worship freely, and they will be nurtured to spiritual maturity by the pastor and evangelists. The mature church members may become mentors for young people aspiring after Christianity. In other words, Christian education extends beyond the school parameter, and it is not reserved for students only, but also for both Christian and non-Christian teachers, as well as the wider community.

With religious freedom, the SB and the Christian school leaders continue to administer Christian education and make valuable contributions to society, unaffected by the change of sovereignty. The principal remains a "minister of values" (cf. Sergiovanni, 1991:335), as s/he communicates Christian ethics and values in assemblies and meetings with the school community as before 1997. The principal works hard to enact servant leadership (cf. Greenleaf, 1996), and spiritual leadership (cf. Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin & Kakabadse, 2002:172; Thom, Ma &

Ho, 2005), in order to equip students to become moral citizens in future.

Learning and Teaching

Informed by the instructional leadership conception (e.g. Lashway, Mazzarella & Grundy, 1997; Weber, 1997), the second broad leadership role of the principal is 'learning and teaching' and it is related to the functions (refer to Figure 2) derived from the following themes: *curriculum issues, delegation, media of instruction, interaction with teachers* and *students*. Over the **curriculum focus** function, the principal is responsible for the standard of instruction in the entire school, but s/he exercises **delegation** to each subject department to be responsible for their own planning, implementing programs, and promoting instructional effectiveness through supervision and participation in research projects. Delegation requires the principal to be knowledgeable about the expertise of the staff, providing clarification and rationale (cf. NASSP, 1992, cited by Gurr, 1996:74; Oswald, 1997a:190; DePree, 1998:132). Each department reports its progress in staff meetings or in yearly written reports, and the principal sets appropriate directions. Impacted by the change of sovereignty, curriculum changes include: more curriculum materials to be taught about China through Civic Education, materials about Taiwan to be reduced, and there is emphasis on Putonghua (Mandarin, the national language of China) teaching. Curriculum is one of the major concerns of the principal leadership role (Sergiovanni, 1995a:4-6; Caldwell, 1998:445, 2002:27-30, 2003:8), particularly Civic Education, which has the focus on "preparing students for their future roles as citizens of China and Hong Kong (Tan, J., 1997:310-1)."

In 1998, the Education Department of HKSAR mandated the segregation of all secondary schools into two categories—using either Chinese Medium of Instruction (CMI) or English Medium of Instruction (EMI) (Ho, 2005). The change of language policy has taken into consideration HKSAR's relation to China in politics and economy, and the fact that 98% of population is Chinese (Tan, J., 1997). Using either English or Chinese as a **medium of instruction** in school, the principal either supervises staff to maintain a high standard of English usage, or supports CMI with the necessary resources of teaching materials, translated texts and examination papers. Increasing emphasis on Putonghua requires better qualified teachers or improvement in the current teachers' expertise; and its use as a medium for teaching the Chinese language will depend on future government policy. Acknowledging that successful transition of change requires the evidence of success (Bridges, 1991, cited by Lashway 1997b:154), the principal recognizes the dynamic complexity of change, monitors the process in detail, supports staff with adequate resources, and evaluates the result of change (cf. Fullan, 1982, 1993), providing learning opportunities for staff (cf. Kaufman, 1997:101; Keefe & Howard, 1997:43); otherwise there will be resistance to the change (cf. Lashway, 1997b:152).

Over the leadership function on **teacher focus**, the principal keeps staff informed through oral and written communications and staff or committee meetings. S/he observes the subject department heads, who observe their subject teachers in class observation, providing feedback as part of the evaluation, teacher promotion and improvement processes (cf. Lam, 2001). S/he supports staff

without discrimination on personal religious belief. However, increased isolation of the principal may arise due to a heavy workload in the decentralization of schools (cf. Whitty, 1994:8-9, cited by Gurr, 1996:170), and s/he may become less aware of the real needs of the school community (cf. Gurr, 1996). The Christian principal will enact servant leadership (cf. Greenleaf, 1996), provide a humanized and supportive environment for both teachers and students (cf. Rowe & Hill, 1994:12, cited by Gurr, 1996:40; Cheng & Tam, 1995:23-5). Under SBM, the promotion system for teachers may become fairer, since consideration includes not only the principal but also representatives of teachers, parents and former students.

Over *student focus*, the principal communicates with students in assemblies, through circulars and school reports. S/he leads the staff in developing a system of reporting student achievements (cf. Griffin, 1997), providing rewards, discipline and counselling to monitor student progress and behaviour. The principal and the Discipline Committee express high expectations, and provide rewards for excellent performance, while unsatisfactory behaviour is monitored and dealt with appropriately. Student participation in extra-curricular activities is ensured to keep a balance between study and play. With continual religious freedom after 1997, the principal remains democratic towards students and nurtures them to become future competent citizens who can express their opinions about government policies and speak out against injustice.

Figure 1: The Principal Leadership Role of Hong Kong Protestant

Christian Secondary Schools Informed by Four Leadership Conceptions
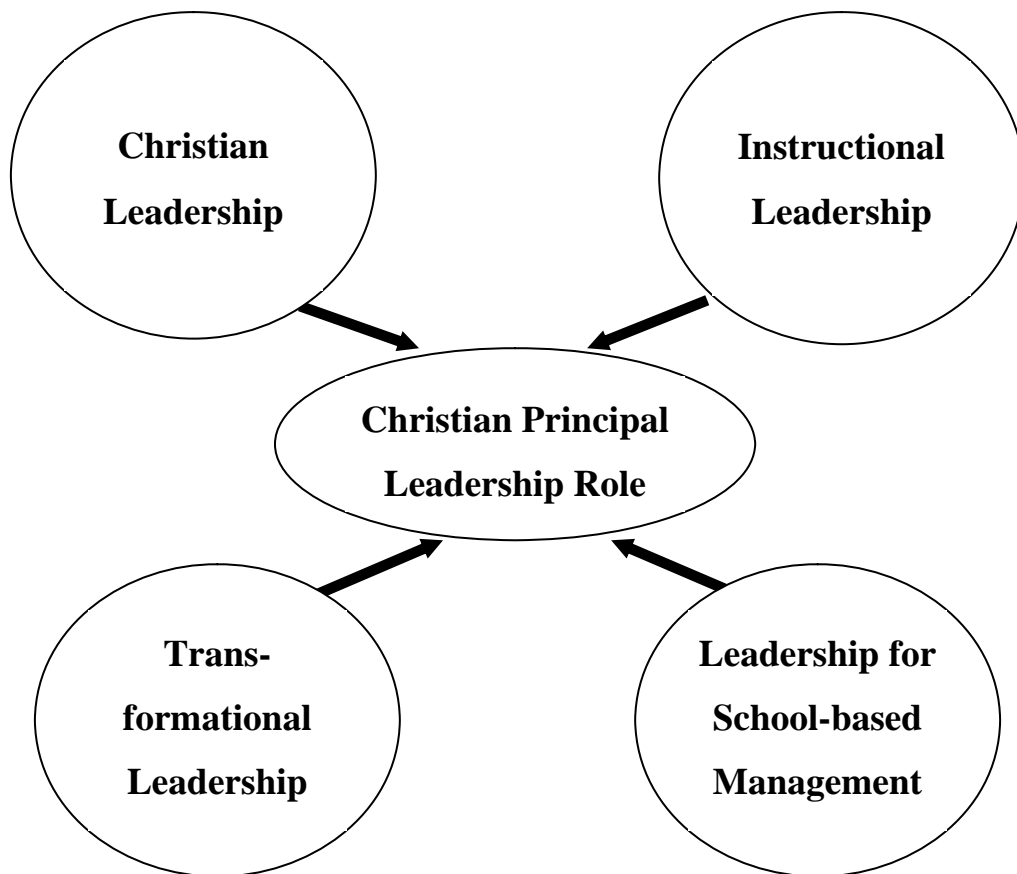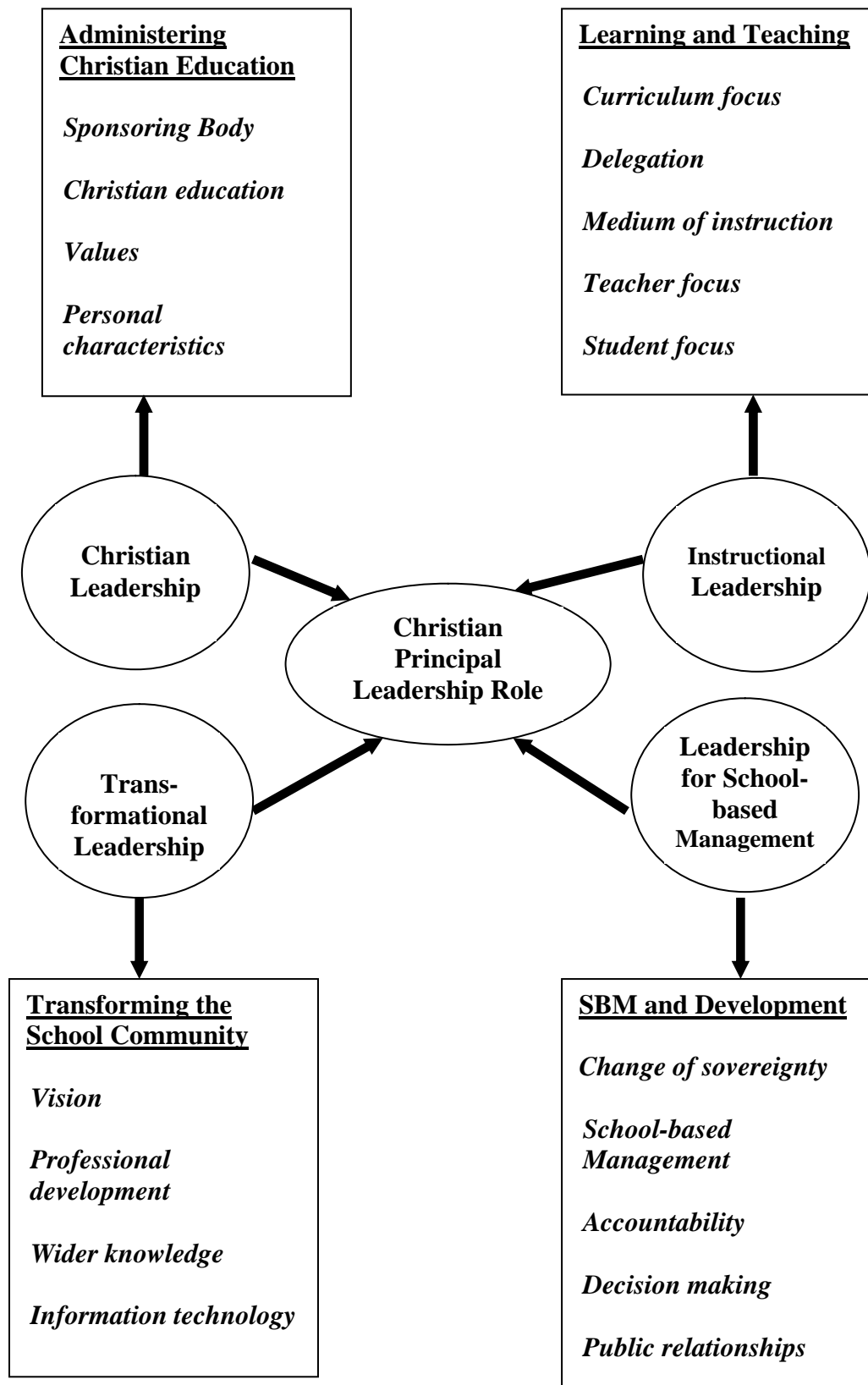
Figure 2: The Christian Principal Leadership Role

Administering Christian Education

Sponsoring Body

Christian education

Values

Personal characteristics

Learning and Teaching

Curriculum focus

Delegation

Medium of instruction

Teacher focus

Student focus

Christian Leadership

Instructional Leadership

Christian Principal Leadership Role

Trans-formational Leadership

Leadership for School-based Management

Transforming the School Community

Vision

Professional development

Wider knowledge

Information technology

SBM and Development

Change of sovereignty

School-based Management

Accountability

Decision making

Public relationships

Figure 3: Details of Christian Principal Leadership Model

Administering Christian Education

Sponsoring Body
- support other principals in school administration under SB
- co-ordinate with the affiliated church to achieve mission

Christian education
- supervise the teaching of Religious Education
- lead and support the religious programs
- support and participate in religious activities

Values
- Christian: express principles and truth from the Bible, emphasis on evangelism and spirituality
- Professional: value continual PD, shared vision, collaboration, consultation, good relationships with the community

Personal characteristics
- personality
- job-related

Learning and Teaching

Curriculum focus
- delegate curriculum co-ordination to DPs and subject department heads
- supervision and research projects

Delegation
- delegate extensively to DPs and staff
- being knowledgeable about the expertise of the staff

Medium of instruction
- use EMI or CMI
- maintain high standard of English or CMI
- emphasis on teaching Putonghua

Teacher focus
- keep teachers informed
- support teachers' PD
- teacher evaluation and improvement

Student focus
- informal and formal communications
- report and monitor behaviour

Transforming the School Community

Vision
- set school mission and goals
- share vision with staff
- vision developed and communicated

Professional development
- support principal networks
- delegate Staff Development Committee to assess needs
- encourage participation in PD programs and research projects
- continual PD

Wider knowledge
- external network and contacts
- keep staff informed
- facilitate decision making

Information technology
- usage and delegation of IT in administration and teaching
- IT skills reaching set standards
- develop IT resources

SBM and Development

Change of sovereignty
- implement multiple changes in education policy
- inspire the school community to love China
- share ideas with mainland counterparts

School-based Management
- set school mission, goals, implementation and evaluation
- co-ordinate with counterparts under the SB
- share decision making with representatives from teachers, PTAs and OSAs
- manage decentralized school budget

Accountability
- principal to government, the SB and School Board
- principal to public for school administration and evaluation
- set accountability to staff

Decision making
- consult the DPs, committees and staff in meetings
- disseminate information
- share decision

Public relationships
- school promotion
- pool resources through establishing good relations with organizations

Transforming the School Community

Informed by the transformational leadership conception (cf., e.g. Bass & Avolio, 1994:3-6; Bass, 1998:7), the third broad leadership role of the principal is 'transforming the school community', which is related to the following themes: *vision, professional development, wider knowledge,* and *information technology*. The principal employs the strategies of a transformational leader (Bass, 1998:6-7; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997; Silins & Murray-Harvey, 1999), and contingent reward of transactional leadership (Bass, 1998:6-7), seeking to transform the school community (cf. Fairholm, 1996:14). S/he articulates *vision* and sets goals (cf. Caldwell, 2004), develops a collaborative decision making structure (e.g. Lau, 2004), symbolizes good professional practice, provides individualized support, provides intellectual stimulation, and holds high performance expectations (Chui, Sharpe & McCormick, 1996; Bass, 1998:6-7). Articulating the school mission through meetings, school introductory pamphlets, programs, reports, and the school websites (cf. Lashway, 1997b:154), the principal binds the school community together and generates commitment from staff and stakeholders to achieve goals to a higher standard. S/he is a visionary leader, being reflective with members of the school community as s/he meets them regularly in meetings and is accessible to them, seeking to empower them through voicing their dreams and encouraging innovation (cf. Caldwell & Spinks, 1992:112; Lashway, 1997b:140-1). Impacted by the change of sovereignty, the principal's vision expanded to embrace the expectation of the new HKSAR government to educate students to increase their competitiveness in the global economy and sustain the international status of Hong Kong (cf. Wong, 1999:4,7, 2000:8). The principal continues to educate students to achieve the six basic goals including spirituality. S/he leads staff in the process of planning, implementing school programs and evaluation, serving the community through education, and inspires trust in God through evangelism, exercising Christian leadership that is similar to servant leadership in embracing principles but with few prescriptions (Greenleaf, 1996:2-3). As followers of Jesus, the principal will lead with compassion (Swann, 1997, 2001) and empowerment by the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:11-3).

The principal may vary strategies in leadership, but s/he will draw insight from the Bible and pray to God for wisdom, power and strength, and be inspired by Jesus' teaching and biblical principles (cf., e.g. Haggi, 1986; Jones, 1992; Pang, 1989, 1996, 1999; Schuller, 1983, 1988, 1993; Yu, 1991), and in time personal knowledge about God and spirituality grows (Galatians 5:22-3). Success will be largely attributed humbly to God, whose power, protection and blessings underpin school administration and whole-person education for students.

Multiple changes implemented after the change of sovereignty require the principals and staff to engage in continual *professional development* in order to acquire multiple competencies or skills (cf., e.g. Caldwell, 1993:17, 1998:445, 2003:8; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998:4-5; The Education Committee, 1995:26,28; Ford, 1995:4-6; Huffstutter et al., 1997:374-82;

Sergiovanni, 1995a:4; Smith & Piele, 1997:2-3; Gurr, 1997; The School-based Management Division, 1999). In exercising leadership, the principal interacts with staff, based on professional knowledge and various other personal factors (cf. Smith & Piele, 1997:3), and s/he needs to be well equipped with sophisticated knowledge and skills (cf. Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989:70; Caldwell, 1993:159-69) in order to meet the accountability requirements (cf. Johnston, 1997:282). S/he inspires and leads staff to develop professionally, acquire IT skills and gain resources to raise the quality of education. The principal is networked in principal associations, supported by the SB and the School Board; and the large network of professionals pools ideas and strategies which may significantly affect the success of principal leadership (cf. Petersen, 2002). Continual PD is modelled by the principal, who inspires the staff to develop their capability to raise the quality of Christian school education (cf., e.g. Pang, 1981; Kruse, 2001:359,362,364), and official training for in-service or aspiring principals may eventually become necessary for continual employment (cf. Bush, in Fung, 2002:85,122; Caldwell & Roskam, 2002:46; Caldwell, 2003:14-15; Ho & Yip, 2003). The Staff Development Committee is set up to assess staff needs and co-ordinate with subject departments to develop old and new staff through participation in courses, research projects, class observation, visits to mainland China or other programs such as computer networking (Tsui, 1999:1,12). Professional development activities have turned from being centralized to being regionalized and to encourage team learning (cf. Gurr, 1996), inclined towards "capacity-building" (Nyland, 1997:279,282) and focused on skill development and outcomes, with emphasis on doing research as a way of PD (cf. Lewis, 1985:139; Deal, 1988:202; Grundy, 1995:5; Sergiovanni, 1995b:43; Wong, 2000:11).

Networking with other principals and organizations, each principal gains *wider knowledge* by sharing ideas and strategies with the others, and pools resources to benefit the school. Keeping the staff well informed, the principal facilitates decision making, particularly in schools under restructuring (cf., e.g. Caldwell & Spinks, 1992:50-5; 1998:4-5; Smith & Piele, 1997:2-3). In stimulating staff with information about current research, the principal is exercising intellectual leadership, which is an emerging role for principals (Louis & Murphy, 1994, Odden, 1995:2-3, cited by Gurr, 1996). It is also increasingly important for the principal to have knowledge about the best practices (Nyland, 1997:283), be adept at disseminating knowledge (Bista & Glasman, 1998:26), and be able to explain trends and "macrodevelopments" (Johnston, 1997:275-82; Johnston & Caldwell, 2001:99-101). As the basis of leadership rests on knowledge rather than in position (Bass, 2000:31), the principal keeps learning to increase wider knowledge and deal with multiple changes after 1997.

The principal delegates the co-ordination of *information technology* skill training to ensure that the staff can reach the standards set by the Education Department, and that the best IT resources are developed. The IT development policy implemented by the HKSAR government required teachers to apply IT skills to meet standards, starting

from 1998 (The Information Services Department, 1999; Wong, 1999:7, 2000:8), confirming Caldwell (in Fung, 2002:193-4) that school practices have changed in dramatic ways as the result of IT development. Knowledge of IT has become increasingly important in schools, the principal is playing more the role of a facilitator than a knowledge provider as IT information is easily available to teachers (cf. Caldwell, in Fung, 2002:193-4). Increasingly the principal is required to become a sophisticated user of management information systems and ensure IT support to teaching and learning (cf. Gurr, 2000a, 2000b; Schiller, 2003), be able to convert information to useful knowledge (cf. Cheng, 2000:7); and developing systematic strategies for teaching IT is "the key education leadership challenge" for the new millennium (Todd, 1999).

School-based Management and Development

Informed by the conception of leadership for SBM (e.g. Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1992, 1998), the fourth broad leadership role of the principal is 'SBM and development', and it is related to the following themes: *change of sovereignty, School-based Management, accountability, decision making,* and *public relationships*. Following the **change of sovereignty**, the principal leadership role has changed to inspire the school community to love China through Civic Education, with more teaching about China and visits to the mainland. Among the implementation of multiple changes of education policies, the most significant one has been the systemic change to **School-based Management** by year 2000 (cf. Anderson, 1998:9; Wong, 1999:4,7, 2000:8; Dimmock, 1999). In implementing SBM, new structures are created and roles redefined (cf. Gurr, 1996; Delaney, 1997:110), and the principal is a transformational leader (cf., e.g. Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1992, 1998; Gurr, 1996), as s/he is continually faced with accountability issues and responding to community expectations. The principal has to lead staff in setting the school mission and goals collaboratively, to engage in a cyclical process of goal-setting, planning, implementation and evaluation. Under the pressure of school reforms (Tam & Szeto, 2000:13-14), successful leadership will not be vested in the principal only but also in other capable school leaders, and s/he may employ the strategies of team-building, building a shared vision, rewarding others with praise, and deal with change effectively (cf., e.g. Oswald, 1997b:215-7; White, 2000, 2001; DuFour, 2000:13; Connolly, Connolly & Jame, 2000). In managing the decentralized school budget, s/he shares decision making with the representatives of teachers, the PTA and the OSA. Networking with their counterparts and organizations outside the school may bring in resources to benefit the school. SBM enables teachers and parents who are closest to the students to make decisions which may lead to improved student outcomes; and it is characterized with responsibility, accountability, shared decision making and open communication (Liontos & Lashway, 1997:226; Oswald, 1997a:203; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998:10-11). While new challenges may be a way of preventing stagnation (Schuller, 1993:119), school administrators need to be aware that theories from different cultural contexts may not exactly fit the local environment (cf. Walker & Dimmock, 2002:207).

The **Accountability** requirement for the principal consists of three levels: (1) the principal is accountable to the government, the SB and the School Board for his/her own performance; (2) the principal has to ensure that performance within the school meets the requirements of the Education Department, the SB and the School Board; and (3) the staff are made accountable by the principal through specification in the staff handbook with statements and rules, the Code of Aid (cf. Gurr, 1996:196; 1997:3-5; Walker & Dimmock, 2002:209; Xia Zongliu, in Fung, 2002:303), with their performance appraised yearly. Given that the education development of the local schools have been aligned to world-wide trends, and the government has built a framework for accountability and provided support at the school level, the principal needs to co-ordinate with the school leaders to plan strategically and develop the capacity for change (cf. Caldwell, 1993:159-69). Under sweeping reforms as reported in Australia (Caldwell, 1992:6-19, 2003:8; Gurr, 1996:81), the principal leadership role has changed to become diverse and complex, with higher expectations and increased pressures for accountability, legitimization and justification of school-level decisions (cf. Murphy & Hallinger, 1992:77-88).

Under SBM, the representatives of teachers, parents and former students act as members of the School Board, and share **decision making** in the school. The principal consults the DPs, committees and staff in meetings, facilitates decision making by disseminating information and being accessible for mutual consultation (cf. Delaney, 1997:110). S/he ensures that effective decisions are made towards well defined school goals to ensure optimal teaching and learning programs (cf. Gurr, 1996, 1997:3-5), and engenders teacher commitment through democratic decisions (cf. Liontos & Lashway, 1997:240).

In the **public relationships** function, the principal needs to communicate with all stakeholders, and to project a good school image by establishing a good relationship with the community and outside organizations in order to attract student intake of the highest academic standard and to bring in resources. The school provides a website for free public access, and transparency is pervasive in school administration. Accompanying SBM implementation, the principal leadership role on public relations has dramatically increased, with emphasis on school promotion and marketing (cf. Murphy & Hallinger, 1992, NASSP, 1992, DSE, 1994a, cited by Gurr, 1996:165). Positive relationships with the school community will help to create a supportive climate for learning (Hopkins, 1994:1-14; Sergiovanni, 1995a:161; Haddock, 1995:391-400; Oswald 1997a:190), and the principal building coalition may bring in resources for the benefit of the school (Thomas et al., 1997:327). As effective communications and relationships are characteristics of excellent schools (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988:31-3; Cheng, 1991:25; Dunphy, Griffiths & Benn, 2003:276), the principal will always treat staff fairly, collaborate and empower them in decision making; and improve relations by being open and accessible (cf. Coursen, Irmsher & Thomas, 1997:304), acting as servant-leaders (Rasmussen, 1995:282-97; Greenleaf, 1996), and harnessing the strength of relationship as suggested by Jones (1992:xv).

The constructed Christian principal leadership role model

encompasses the 18 leadership functions converted from respective themes. Each function has been placed under the most relevant broad leadership role, but it may be concerned with one or more roles. For example, *professional development* may concern all the broad leadership roles, as the principal needs to develop relevant skills and strategies for all these roles in order to lead more efficiently and effectively. *Personal characteristics* may vary among different principals in terms of style and characteristics of enacting each broad leadership role. *Information technology* is relevant to all broad leadership functions, since it is related to every aspect in school, particularly teaching and learning, and school administration. This model reflects the principal leadership role not only of Christian schools, but also of the other local schools, which are, as revealed by the research participants, generally being administered similarly by the Education Department (later merged with the Education and Manpower Bureau, which has been renamed Education Bureau since 1st July, 2007).

Research Directions

Some research directions are highlighted to advance school leadership and Christian education in Hong Kong: (1) investigate change in the Christian principalship over time since SBM implementation in 2000; (2) establish causal relationships between principal behaviour and school outcomes in successful Protestant Christian schools; and (3) investigate the effect of Christian education on current or former students in Protestant Christian schools.

Conclusions

The principal leadership role of the Hong Kong Protestant Christian secondary schools was found to be complex, more so as this role has experienced multiple changes in education policies after 1997. The principal leadership model discussed above has revealed that the principal is informed by four leadership conceptions as s/he enacts four broad leadership roles composed of 18 leadership functions. The Christian principal is a moral leader who instills Christian values, meets the needs of the school community (cf. Burns, 1978, 1998:133). S/he may incorporate styles, strategies or skills learnt from contemporary leadership conceptions, and exercise Christian leadership modelled by Jesus and according to biblical principles, providing full support to the staff in bringing forward quality education and striving to achieve valued goals (Pang, 2000). The Christian school, the church and the home will work together in a harmonious "tripod" relationship (Schindler, 1995:416,422), as they commit education to the hands of God (Twelves, 2001).

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Acronyms

CMI – Chinese Medium of Instruction
DP – Deputy Principal
EMI – English Medium of Instruction
HKSAR – Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IT – Information technology
OSA – Old Student Association
PD – Professional development
PTA – Parent Teacher Association
SB – The Sponsoring Body
SBM – School-based Management
TA – Transactional leadership
TL – Transformational leadership

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